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HINDU MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE

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RAYMOND BURNIER

Hindu medieval sculpture

79 original photographs

LA PALME
1, RUE BEAUJON, PARIS

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Raymond Burnier's photographs mainly show details of sculptures in Khajuraho and Bhuvaneshvara temples. The picture above the foreword represents a hunting-scene from the Mukteshvara Temple. The 78 full page plates are divided into fives series amongst which have been placed landscapes and general views.

The Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho, 954 A. D.

Sculptures from the Parashvanatha Jaina Temple. Khajuraho, 11 th century. *XVI PLATES.*

The Kandariya Mahadeva Temple. Khajuraho.

Sculptures from the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple and the Kali Temple. Khajuraho. *XIV PLATES.*

The Lakshmana Temple. Khajuraho.

Sculptures from the Adinatha Jaina Temple and the Duladeo Temple. Khajuraho. *XX PLATES.*

The Bindu Sagara tank and the Lingaraja Temple. Bhuvaneshvara.

Sculptures from the Rajarani Temple. Bhuvaneshvara. *XVII PLATES.*

The Mukteshvara Temple. Bhuvaneshvara.

Sculptures from the Mukteshvara Temple and the Brahmeshvara Temple. Bhuvaneshvara. *XI PLATES.*

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Hindu Medieval Sculpture

THE period generally called Medieval in India extends from the ninth to the fourteenth century. It corresponds to a great revival of Hindu culture following the decline of the Gupta dynasty and the dismemberment of Harshă's empire in the seventh century. It ends with Muslim conquest.

During Medieval times the country was divided into a number of kingdoms, each trying to outdo the others in the display of its luxury, the splendour of its buildings and the renown of its scholars. Kings not only protected artists and men of learning but were often themselves keen students who wrote books on philosophy, music and astronomy. Some of the literary and philosophical writings of this period are considered today classics of Sanskrit literature. But the most outstanding legacy of the greatness of this age are the temples many of which are still intact. Among the multitude of Gods and fantastic beings which crowd their walls are found some of the masterpieces of Indian sculpture.

The Hindu Temple

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THE Hindu Temple is not primarily a place of worship where the faithful assemble. Built in honour of a particular aspect of Divinity, it is a tabernacle where a symbol or image is worshipped by qualified priests according to an elaborate ritual.

The temple is conceived as a representation of the Universe; not an outward picture, but a scheme in which groups of symbols, representing the different fundamental energies, are combined, according to carefully planned proportions, to form a magic diagram, a "*Yantră*", thought to synthetise the numbers and proportions from which a particular universe is considered to arise. There are several known plans of temples according to various types of diagrams and dedicated to particular deities.

Like the temple itself, each sculpture is carved in conformity with a diagram, and very strict canons regulate all proportions, even the size of the pupils or the breadth of the nostrils. The unit of measure for the whole temple is generally the finger-breadth of the architect or that of the donor. Most of the canons are still available in Sanskrit treatises on architecture. These elaborate proportions aim at creating ideal types, entirely harmonious, in which the relation between the limbs, the rhythm of every gesture, tend towards conveying a given feeling or idea, much like the numerical relations upon which are built the chords of music. The proportions differ in every detail for the representation of deities and that of other beings.

The temple is made in three parts, the sanctuary, the nave, and the vestibule. The sanctuary is a small cubical room containing the image or symbol of the deity to whom the temple is dedicated. Above is the tower or "śhikhară", a high pyramidal construction made of seven superimposed rows of small turrets, representing the heavenly worlds or "bhumi".

The nave, or "mandapam" is in front of the sanctuary. Its central corbelled vault of elaborate design rests on massive pillars. The outer light comes in through open balconies. Before the nave is the vestibule made of two or three smaller square vaults. A flight of steps leads to the entrance, the temple being usually built on a high platform.

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Sculptures and ornaments cover the inside and outside walls of the temple. The place of each image is fixed, and since each element of the temple has a significance, there cannot be any blank, empty wall. The structure is determined by the ornaments. It is in this that the design of the Hindu temple mainly differs from other architectural conceptions.

The sites

K*hajuraho,* the capital of an important kingdom in the Deccan during the tenth century, is the site of the largest group of temples of the Medieval period surviving in Northern India. When, in the twelfth century, *Mahobā,* situated twenty miles to the North, became the capital, Khajuraho rapidly declined. Today no vestige remains of its wide avenues lined with palaces and mansions of brick and wood, but ten temples are still standing, spread over a large area now covered with fields and jungle. Some of these temples are of considerable size, and their high towers can be seen from a great distance. Built of massive stone they have withstood almost a thousand years of neglect. In the beginning of this century they were repaired, in collaboration with the Archeological Department of the Government of India, by the late Maharajah of Chhattarpur, in whose state they are situated. Most of the Khajuraho temples are Hindu temples, dedicated originally to Śhivă, Viṣhṇu and the Sun. A few, however, belong to the Jaină sect; but these do not differ in style and are covered with images of Hindu deities.

B*huvanéśhvară*, an ancient city of Orissa near the bay of Bengal, lies South of the river Mahānadī, near Cuttack. The city was already famous in the time of the Buddhist emperor Aśhokă in the third century B. C. A few centuries ago the river on which Bhuvanéśhvară was built changed its course. The city was partly abandoned but remained a centre of pilgrimage and its main temples are still used for worship. It was recently again chosen as the capital of the province. Although remains of the third century B.C. and of the third and fourth centuries A.D. have been found in the neighbourhood, the only standing temples of Bhuvanéśhvară cannot be dated earlier than the eighth and the ninth centuries. The most important temples, however, both from the point of view of size and style, date from the tenth and eleventh centuries. The sculpture, more free and more ornate than at Khajuraho, includes some of the most lively compositions ever realised in stone.

Hindu deities

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SINCE hindu medieval sculpture is essentially religious, it is not possible to separate its artistic merit from the religious and philosophical conceptions underlying its form. The *Brahman*, the ultimate Principle of all existence, is beyond number and form, beyond the reach of thought and word. It is neither one nor several, and can be defined only negatively. The Upaniṣhads speak of it saying "it is not this nor that", and define it as the "Non-dual". When envisaged as the cause of manifestation, the Brahman becomes polarised. This implies the appearance of a group of three interdependent tendencies, the *Gună*, which are found at the root of all that exists, and are represented as the three persons of the Hindu Trinity.

The *Tamas* tendency, the centrifugal force or tendency towards dispersion, that is destruction, obscuration, but also ultimately liberation from all that binds, is personified as *Śhivă*, the "Lord of Peace". When his destructive aspect is envisaged, he is called *Bhairava*, "The Fearful" or *Rudră*, the " Lord of Tears ".

The *Sattvă* tendency, the centripetal force which binds the world together, is the tendency towards light, truth, union with the Higher Reality, that is, salvation. It is personified as *Viṣhṇu*, "the Pervader" the Preserver of the World. The divine aspect, which comes down among men as an Avatārā to protect mankind and establish the rules of righteousness, is always the Viṣhṇu aspect.

The *Rajas* tendency, or tendency towards circular movement, is the result of the equilibrium of the two other forces. From it arise all the forms which make the perceptible universe. It represents action or creation, personified as *Brahmā*, the " Lord of Vastness ", the Creator.

Around Śhivă centers the metaphysical speculation of the man of wisdom, who desires to be freed from existence. The religious and moral aspirations of the average man, who seeks eternal life, that is the continuance of his individuality, are concerned only with the Viṣhṇu aspect. Brahmā is a dynamic principle upon which depend the architects of the Universe, the Gods and Angels, and also those early sages who take an active part in the shaping of a given world.

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Each of the three tendencies has a dual aspect, represented as male and female. The abstract or static tendency is spoken of as male; while its energy, or applied form, is considered female. Hence each of the three gods has a feminine counterpart or consort.

The consort of Śhivă is *Śhăkti*, Energy, or Pārvati the "Daughter of the Mountain". She is worshipped by the humble and the sage, who call her *Kālī* the "Power of Time". The consort of Viṣhṇu is *Lakṣhmī*, the Goddess of Fortune, honoured by the wealthy. The consort of Brahmā is *Sarasvatī* the "Lady of the Lake", the Goddess of Learning, worshipped by seekers after knowledge.

Each of the Divine entities has further minor aspects personified as their sons, companions or attributes. These fill the Hindu pantheon with a vast number of Gods and Goddesses who are all interrelated. Their orderly cohorts surround the temple and dominate its ornamentation. Among the gods stand the fantastic lions called *Śhardulă*, who represent the "Power of Nature", Prakriti, and the Apsarā, who are the "Uncreated Possibilities", and are depicted as the lovely young women of Paradise. While explaining the meaning of the Apsarā, the Science of Symbols holds that the substance of the Universe is identical with that of thought. There is no real "matter" but only the projection of a Divine idea in the form of a Universe. Possible universes are numberless. Many are created then vanish, many remain uncreated in the Divine Mind, from which they may one day spring forth as a realisation.

Other figurations have an important place in the temple's symbolism. *Mithună* is "the Union of the Cosmic Principles". Two opposing and complementary forces pervade all things, and their union is the cause of existence. Only through the understanding of their mutual action can man be liberated from life and death. Through the contemplation of the Mithună, he becomes free from passions which are the cause of his bondage.

The *Năgă*, or Serpents, are genii of the Underworld. They are attendants of Śhivă of whom the snake is an attribute. The *Gandharvă* and the *Kinnară* are the musicians of Paradise. They are often represented with birds' feet, the legs of a deer and the body of a man. *Varună*, the "Lord of the Waters" is of youthful appearance and carries a noose. *Agni*, the "Lord of Fire" rides on a ram and is surrounded by flames. *Yamă*, the "Lord of Death", rides on a buffalo, usually shown

on his pedestal. *Nandikeśhvară* is the inseparable companion of Śhivă. He is represented as a bull, or with a human body and a bull's head. The leader of Śhivă's knights, he is celebrated for his bravery. He is also one of the great teachers of music.

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Humans appear only in a few corners of the lower part of the temple. They are easily recognised since they do not wear crowns as do all the Gods. They are shown with realistic or comic features, contrasting with the stylisation which is the rule for the representation of divine beings.

To end this outline of the significance of the figures which adorn the temple, we must mention among animals *Hamsă*, the goose, the symbol of wisdom. It can separate milk, the divine essence, from water, the world of appearances, with which it was mixed.

The whole of these philosophical conceptions, enclosed in a precise and complex symbolism, are shown in the diagram of the temple, and in the canons of the works of art which adorn its walls. It is from these conceptions that Hindu art derives its peculiar force and its ability to move us ; the artists having been raised above their own genius by a superior concept of which they were the servants.

Ś H I V Ă Ś H A R A N

Sanskrit words in the foreword have been given with diacritical marks. These have not been used in printing the captions.

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The Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho, 954 A. D.

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SCULPTURES FROM THE PARASHVANATHA JAINA TEMPLE.

KHAJURAHO, 11th CENTURY.

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The Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
South façade.

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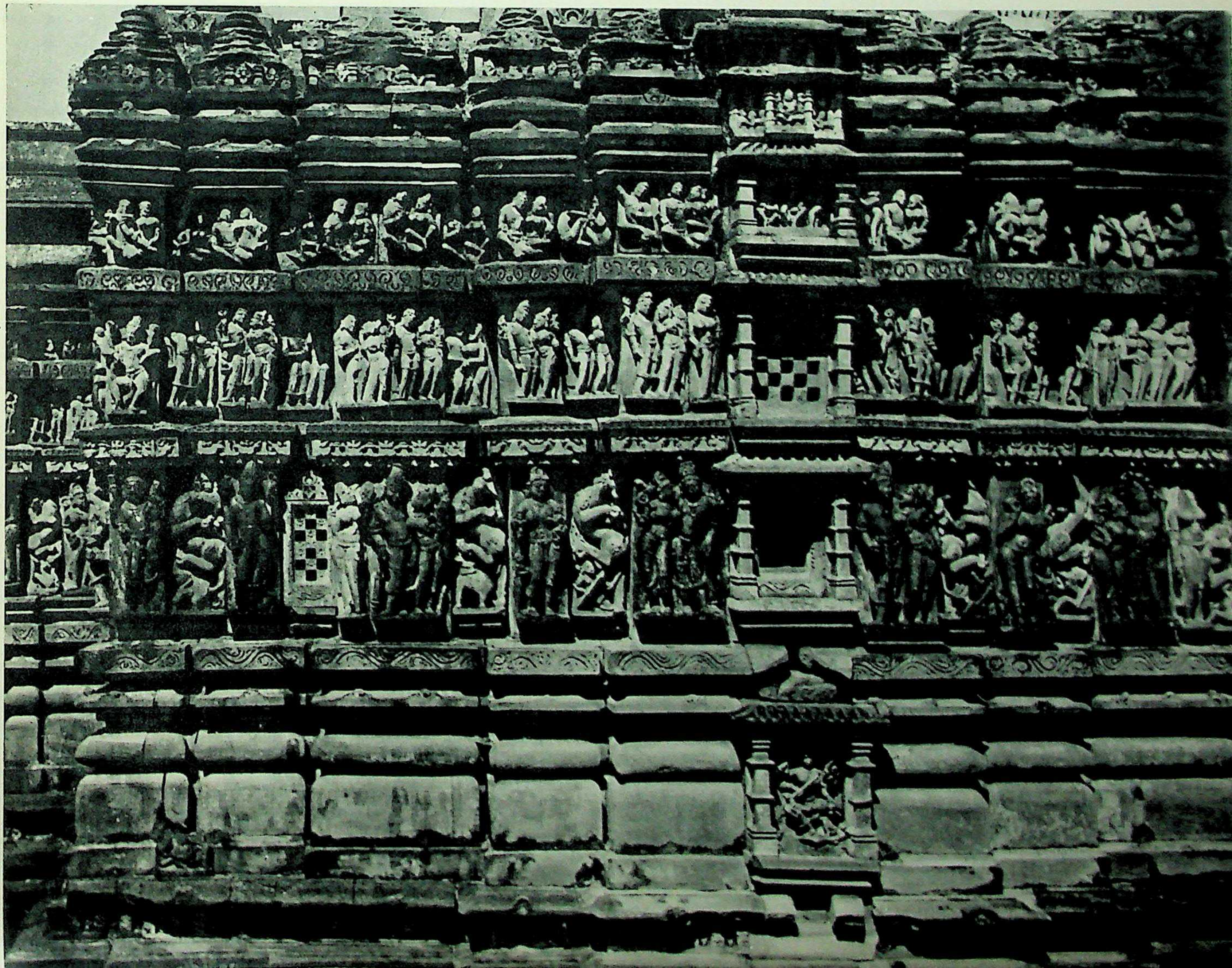

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Vishnu, the Preserver.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Vishnu, the Preserver.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Brahma, the Creator,
the Lord of Vastness.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Agni, the Lord of Fire.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Agni, the Lord of Fire.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Parvati, the Daughter of the Mountain.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Vishnu, the Preserver.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Vishnu, the Preserver.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Parvati, the Daughter of the Mountain.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Bhairava, the Fearful
(an aspect of Shiva).
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Apsara.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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Apsara.
Parashvanatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 11th century.

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The Kandariya Mahadeva Temple. Khajuraho.

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SCULPTURES FROM THE KANDARIYA MAHADEVA AND FROM THE KALI TEMPLES. KHAJURAHO, 10th CENTURY.

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*The Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Northern façade.
Khajuraho, 10th century.*

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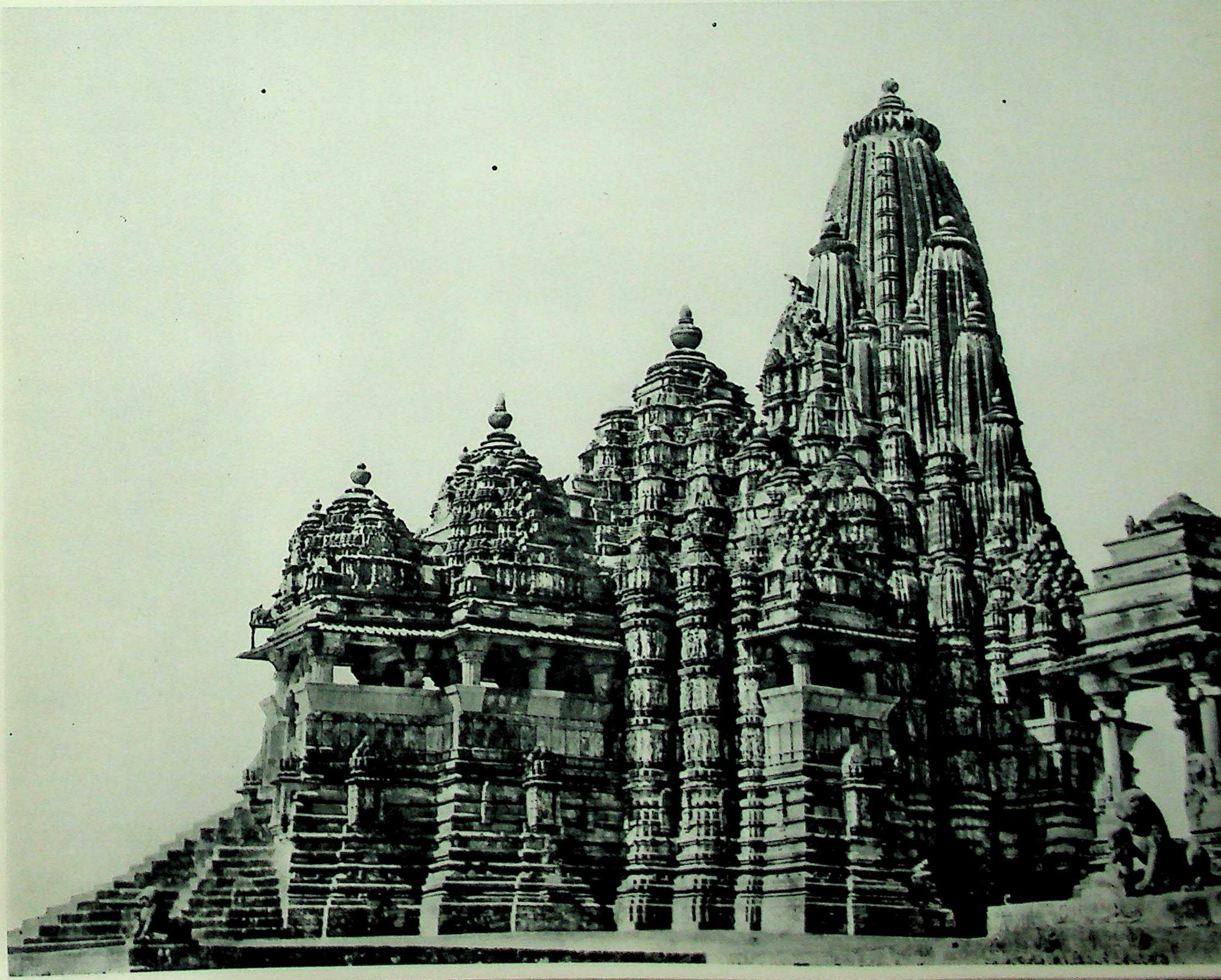

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The Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
South West corner.
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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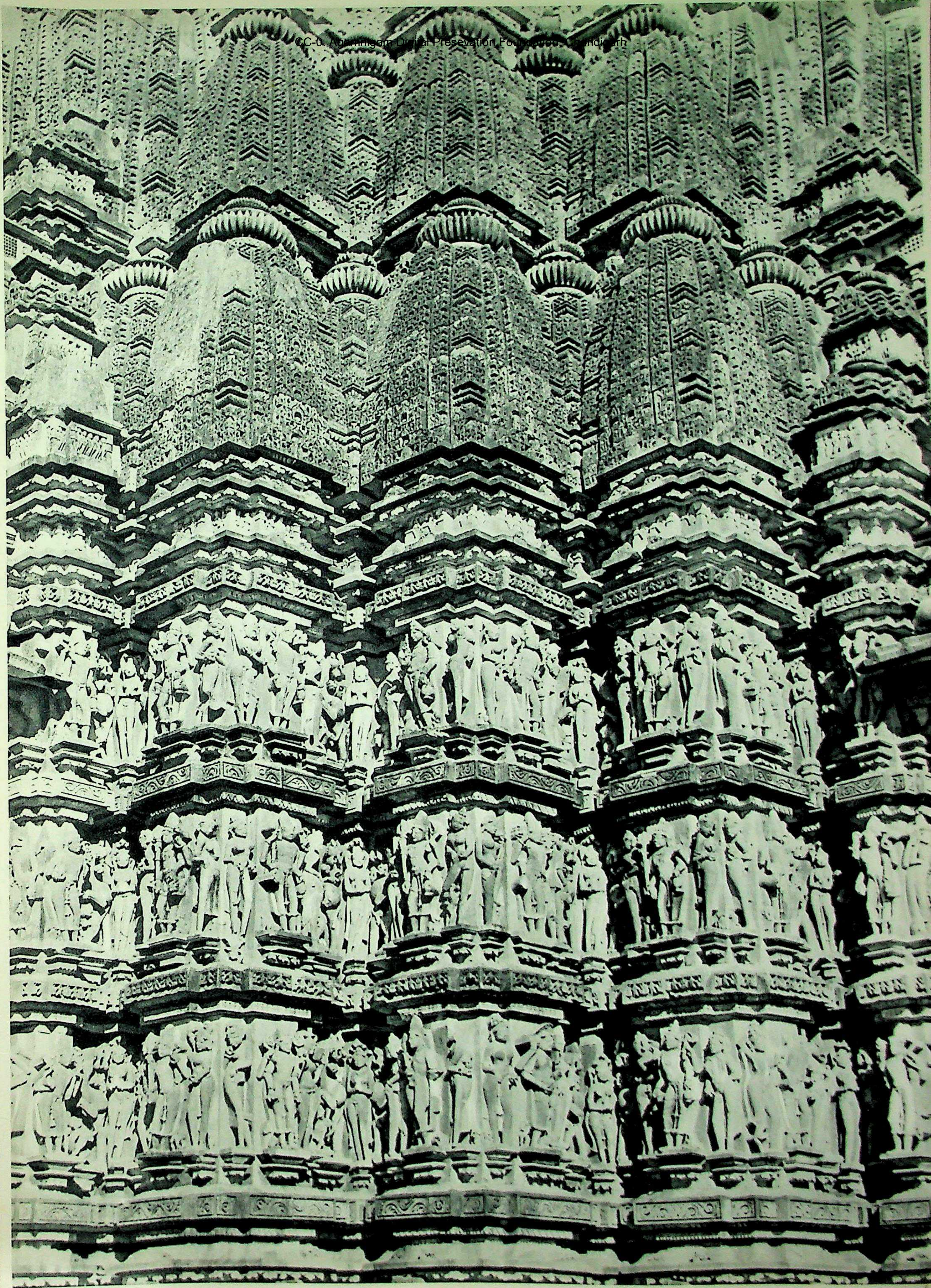

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Apsara with a mirror.
Kali temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara with a mirror.
Kali temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara.
Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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The Union of the Cosmic Principles.
Kali temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara with a mirror.
Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara playing the flute.
Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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The Union of the Cosmic Principles.
Kali temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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*Apsara with a scorpion.
Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.*

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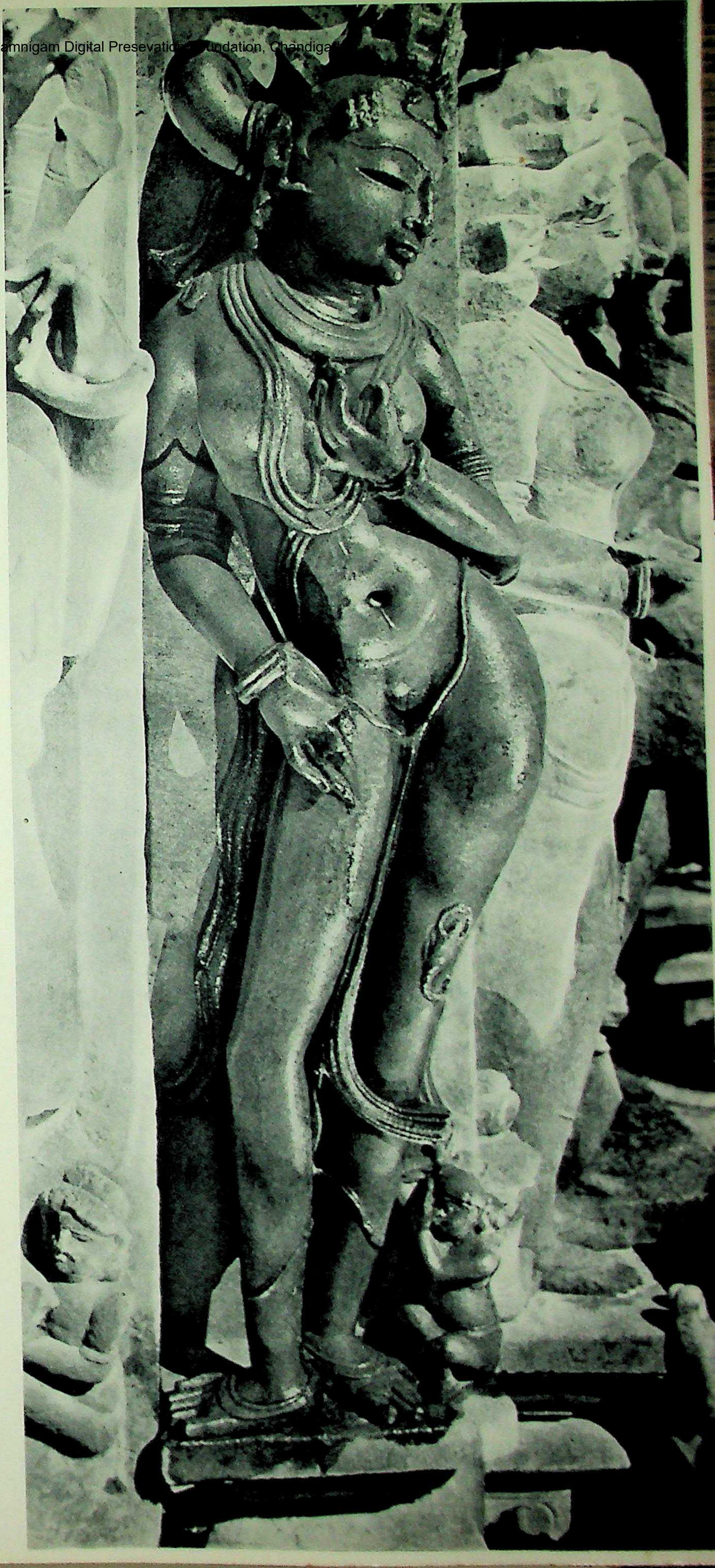

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Apsara removing a thorn.
Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara with a water jug.
Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara.
Kandariya Mahadeva temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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The Lakshmana Temple. Khajuraho.

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SULPTURES FROM THE ADINATHA JAINA AND FROM THE DULADEO TEMPLES. KHAJURAHO, 10th CENTURY.

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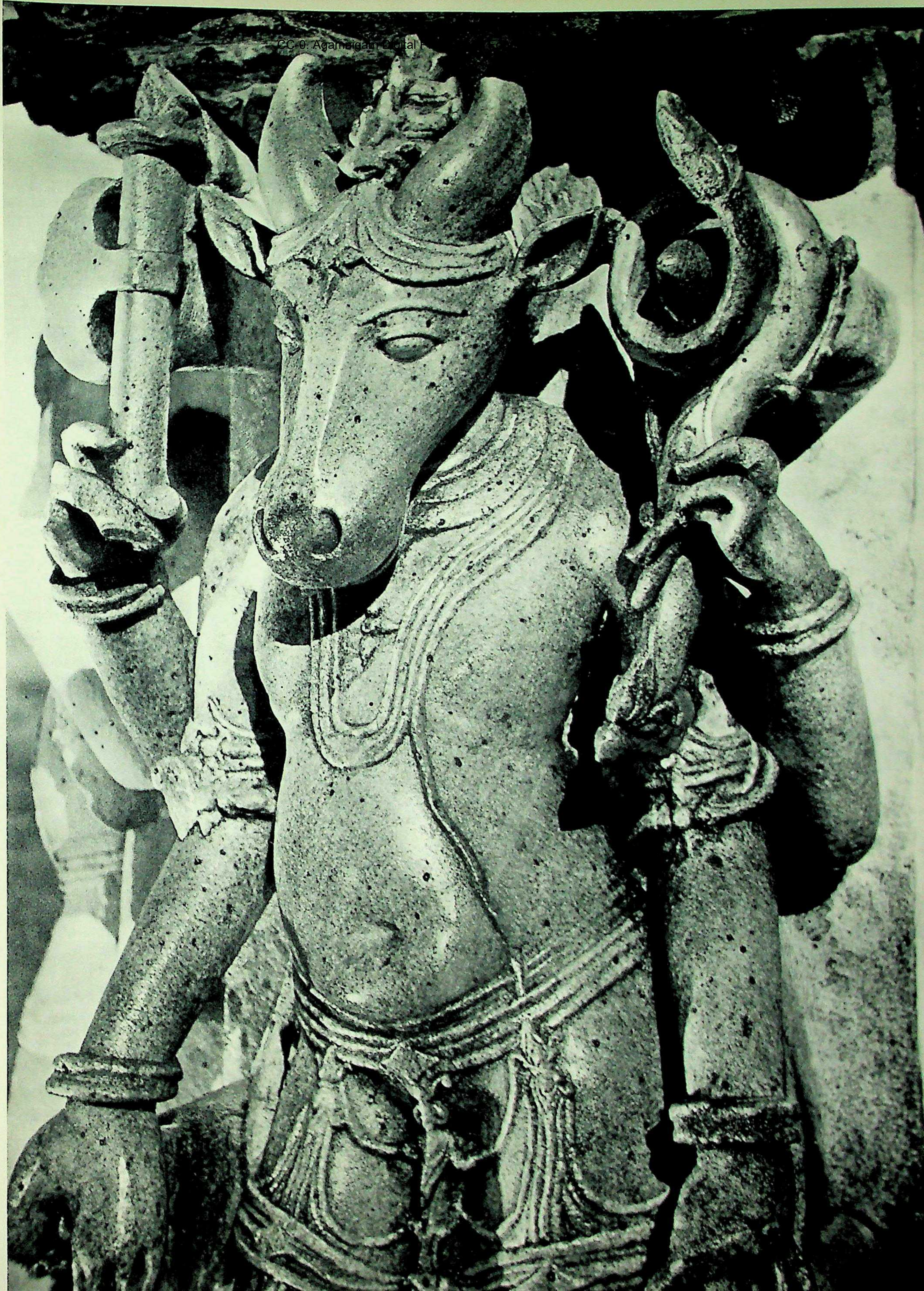
Nandikeshvara,
the bull headed companion of Shiva.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.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Nandikeshvara,
the bull headed companion of Shiva.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara carrying an offering.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Dancing Apsara.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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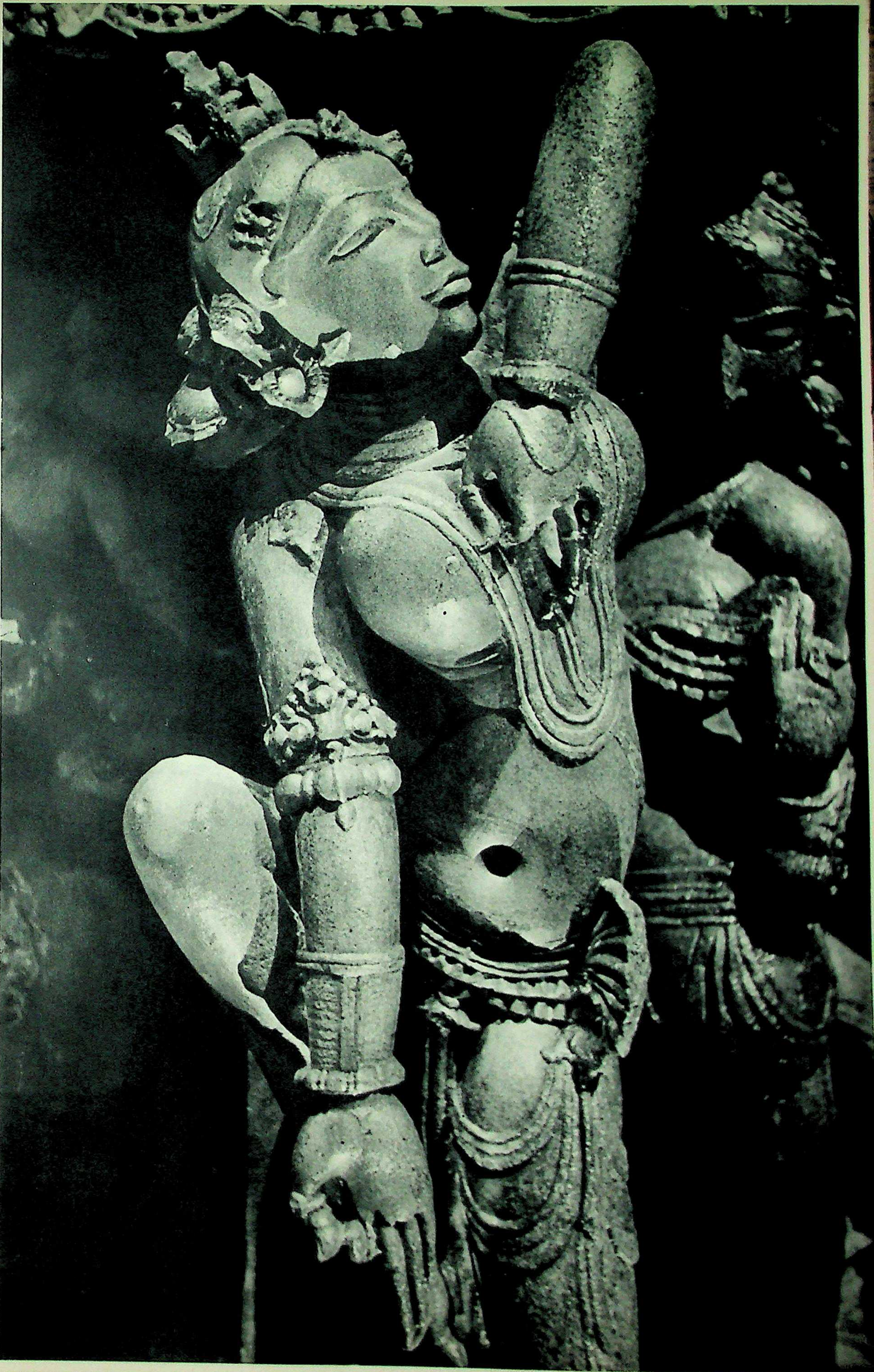
Dancing Apsara.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.



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Dancing Apsara.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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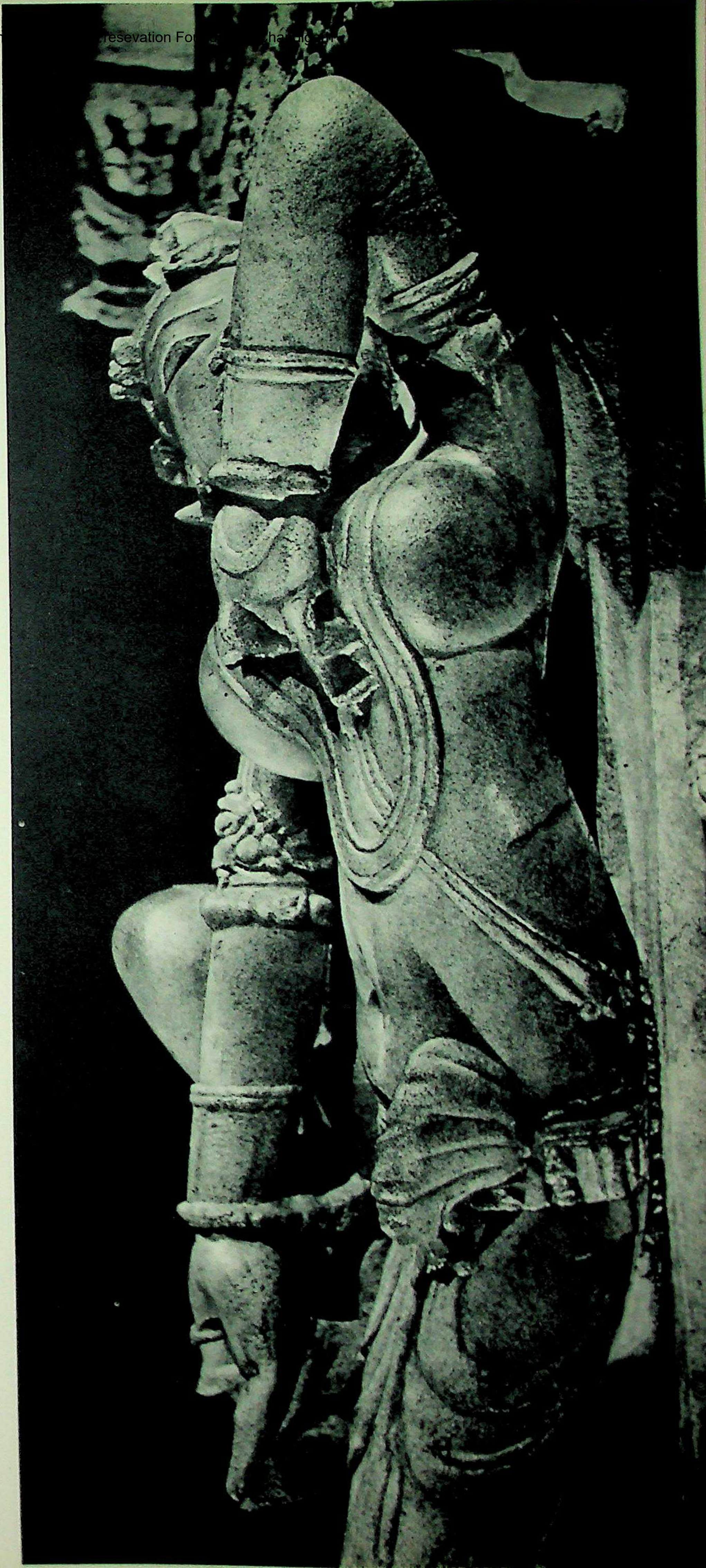

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Apsara with a mirror.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara with a mirror.
Adinatha Jaina temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Rudra, the Lord of Tears.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Dancing Apsara.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Dancing Apsara.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Dancing Apsara.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara.

Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Apsara.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Human being.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Dancing Apsara.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Flying Deva.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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Flying Deva playing the flute.
Duladeo temple,
Khajuraho, 10th century.

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The Bindu Sagara tank and the Lingaraja Temple. Bhuvaneshvara.

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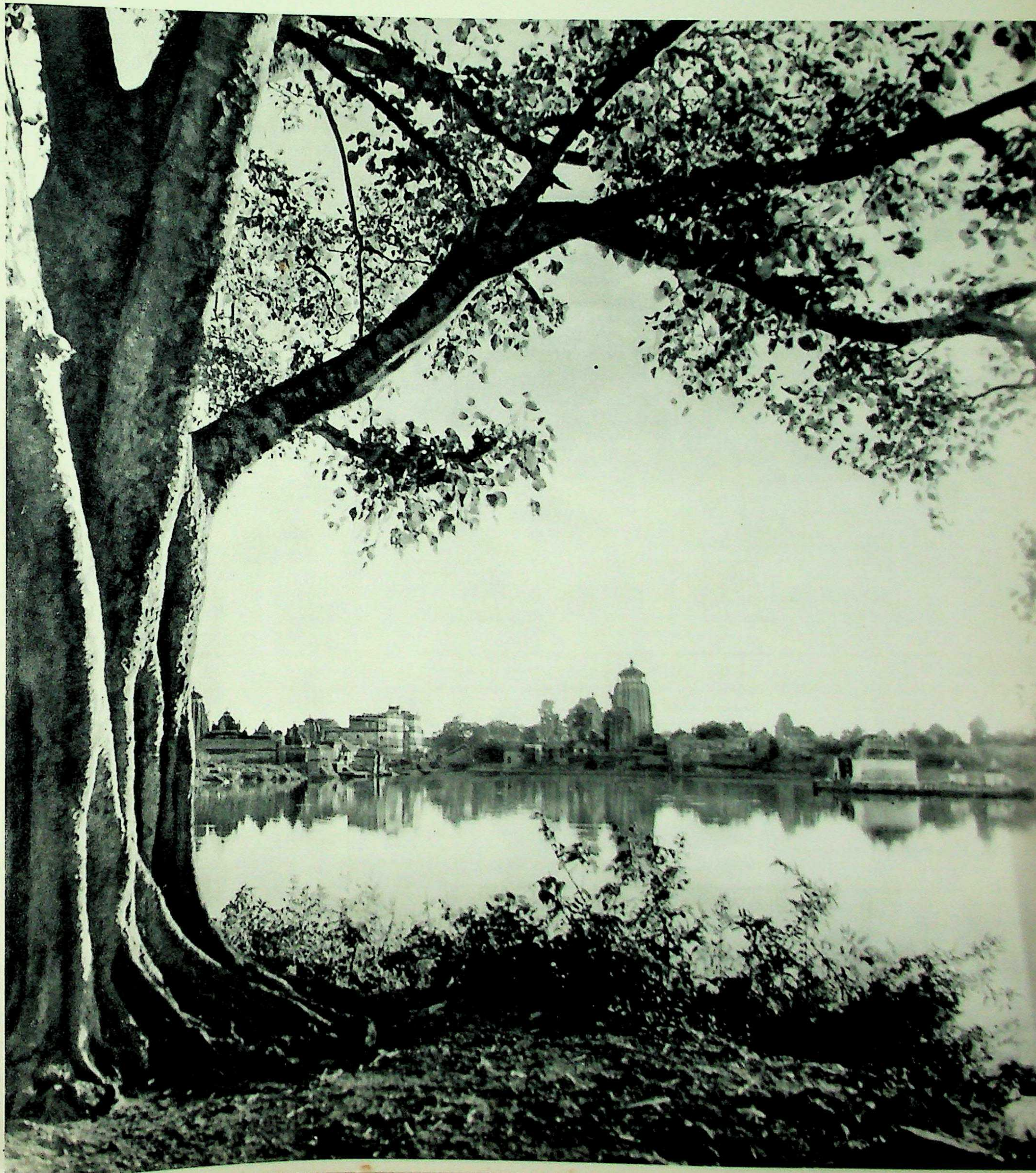

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SCULPTURES FROM THE RAJARANI TEMPLE.

BHUVANESHVARA, 12th CENTURY.

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*The Lotus, pedestal of Lakshmi.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.*

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Varuna, Lord of the Waters.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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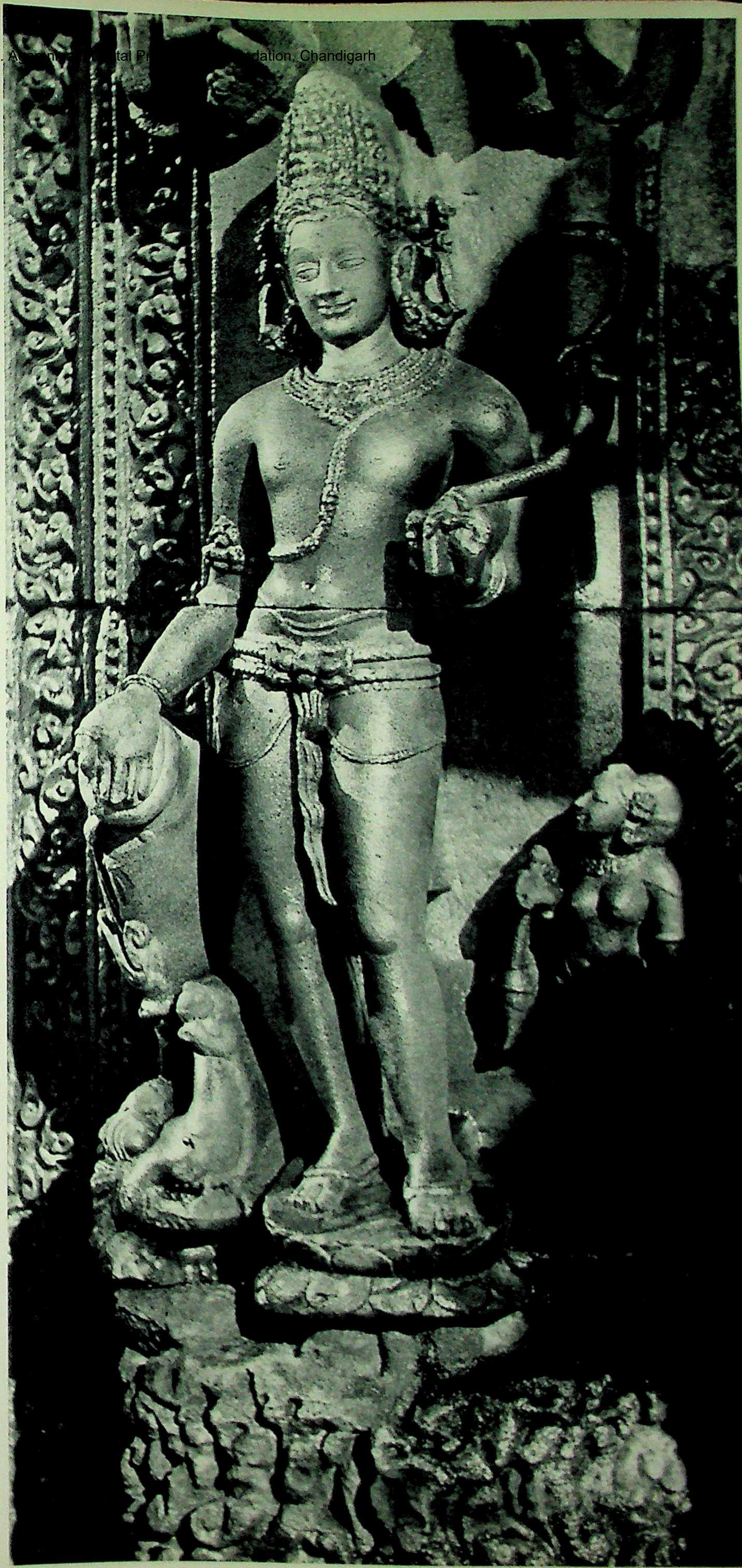

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Varuna, Lord of the Waters.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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Varuna, Lord of the Waters.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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Apsara with a peacock.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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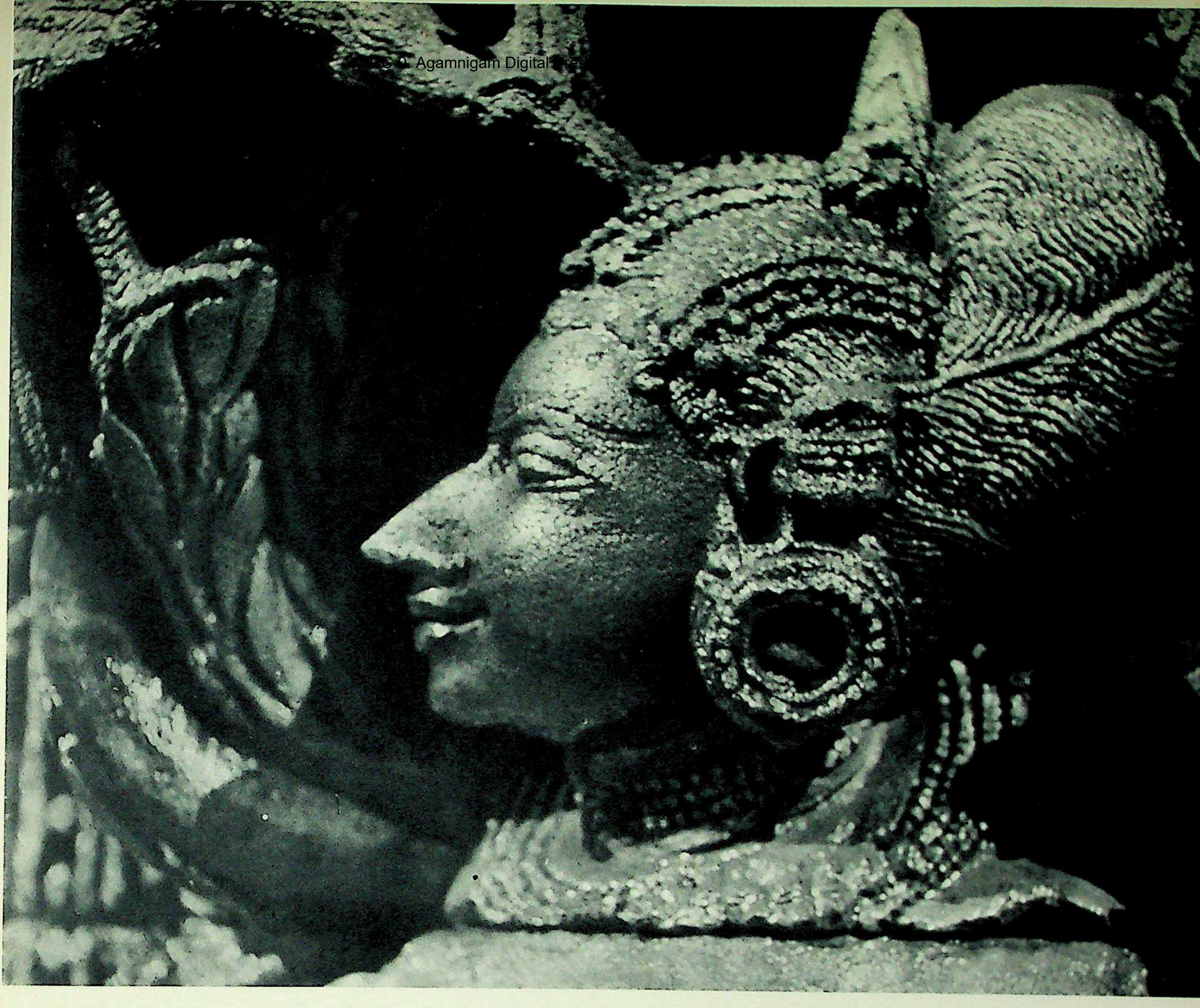
Apsara with a peacock.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.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Apsara in a garden.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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Apsara in a garden.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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Apsara holding a creeper.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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Apsara with a mirror.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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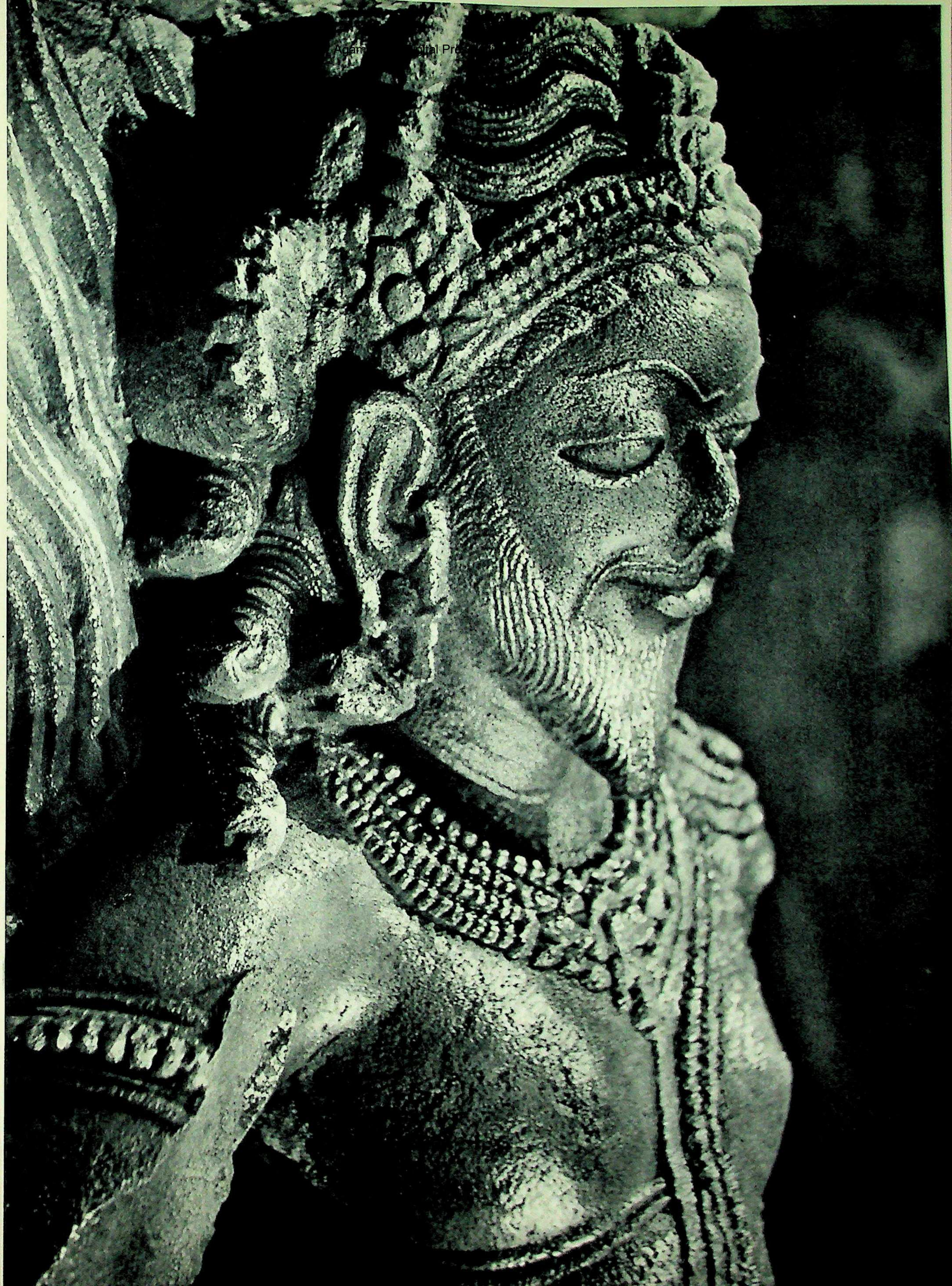
Agni, the Lord of Fire.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.



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Agni, the Lord of Fire.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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Apsara with a mirror.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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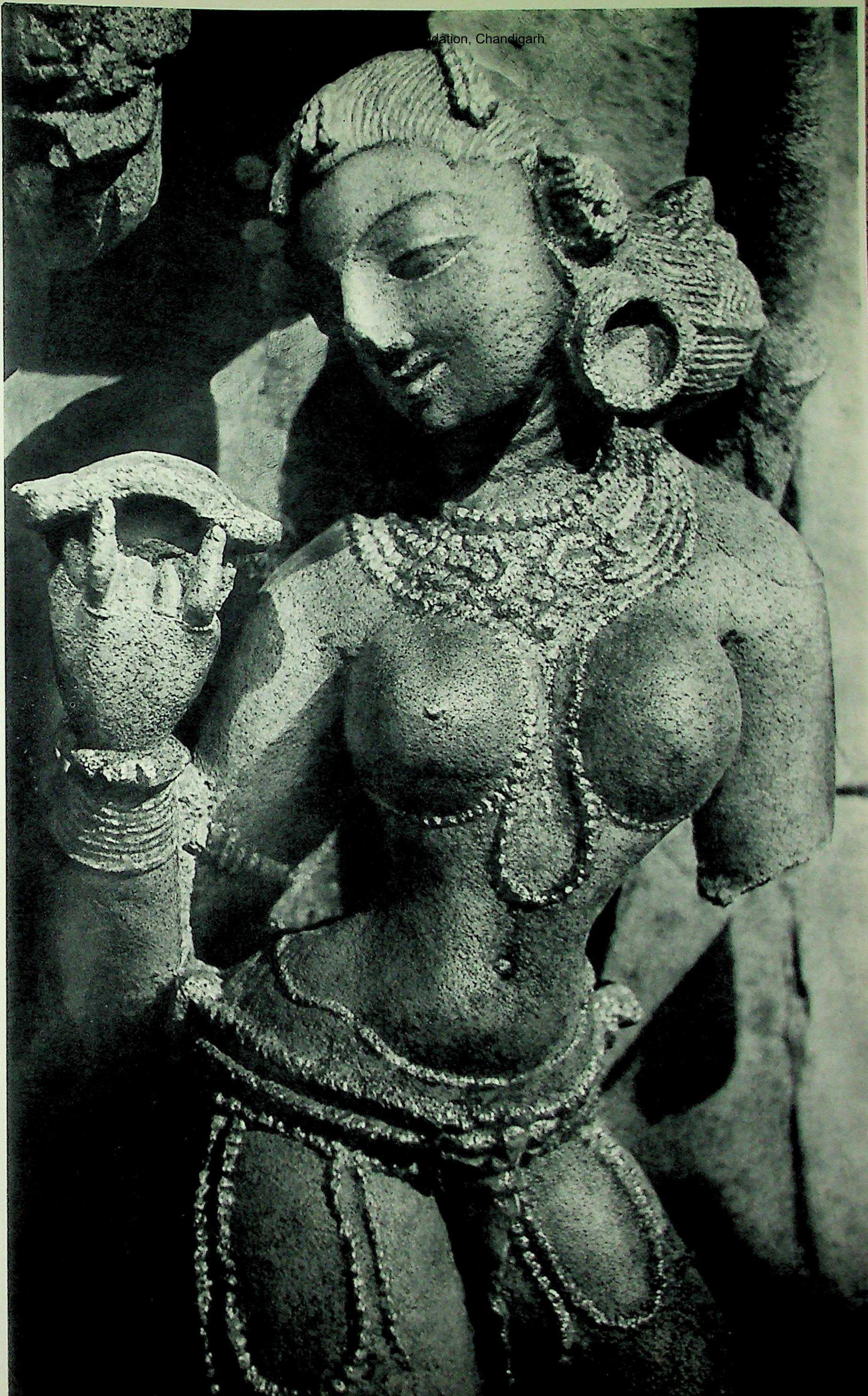

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Head of an Apsara.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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Shardula, mythical lion.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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The buffalo vehicle of Yama,
the Lord of Death.
Rajarani temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 12th century.

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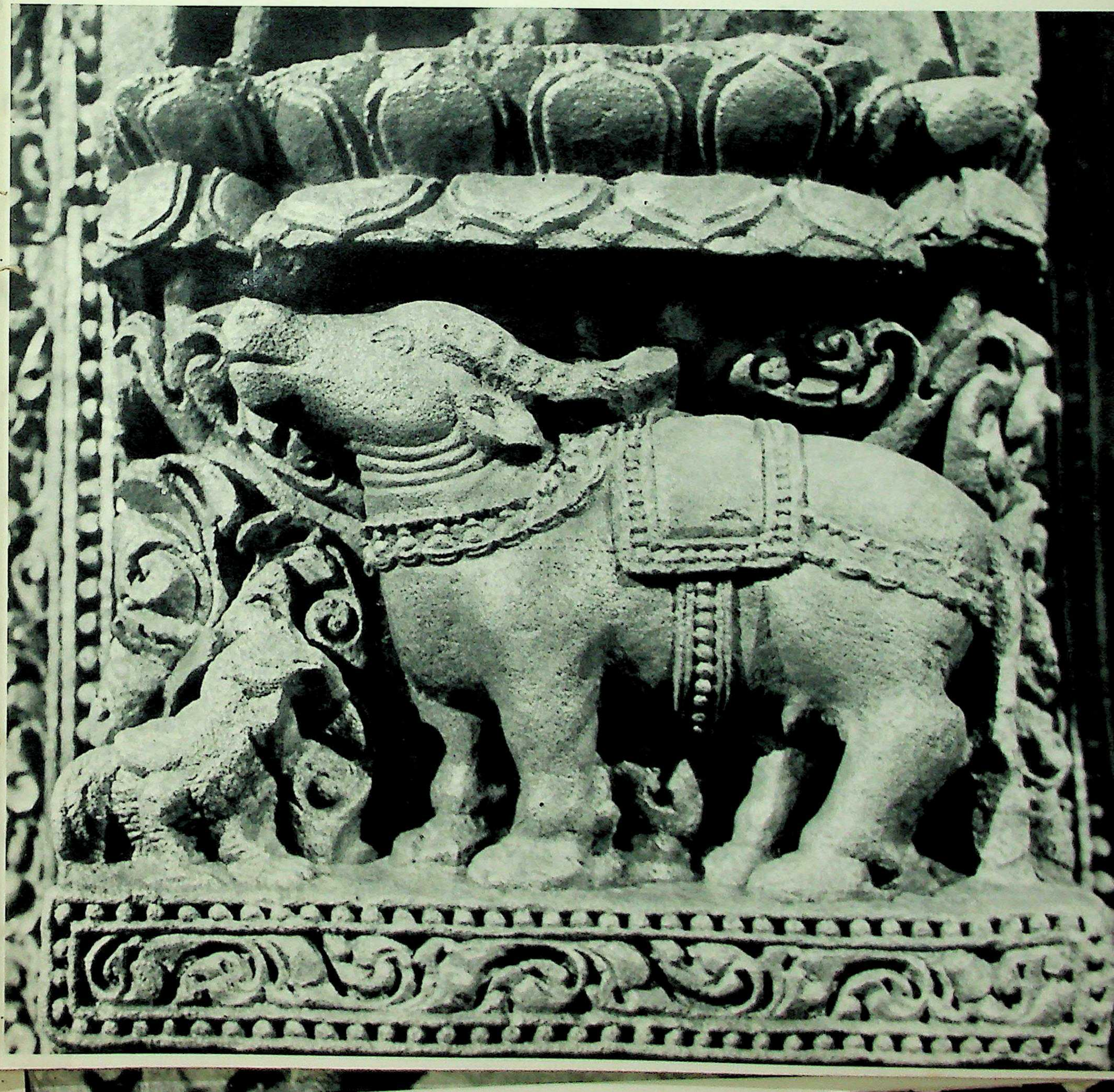

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The Mukteshvara Temple, Bhuvaneshvara.

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SCULPTURES FROM THE MUKTESHVARA AND FROM THE BRAHMESHVARA TEMPLES. BHUVANESHVARA, 10th AND 11th CENTURIES.

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Part of the tower,
Mukteshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 10th century.

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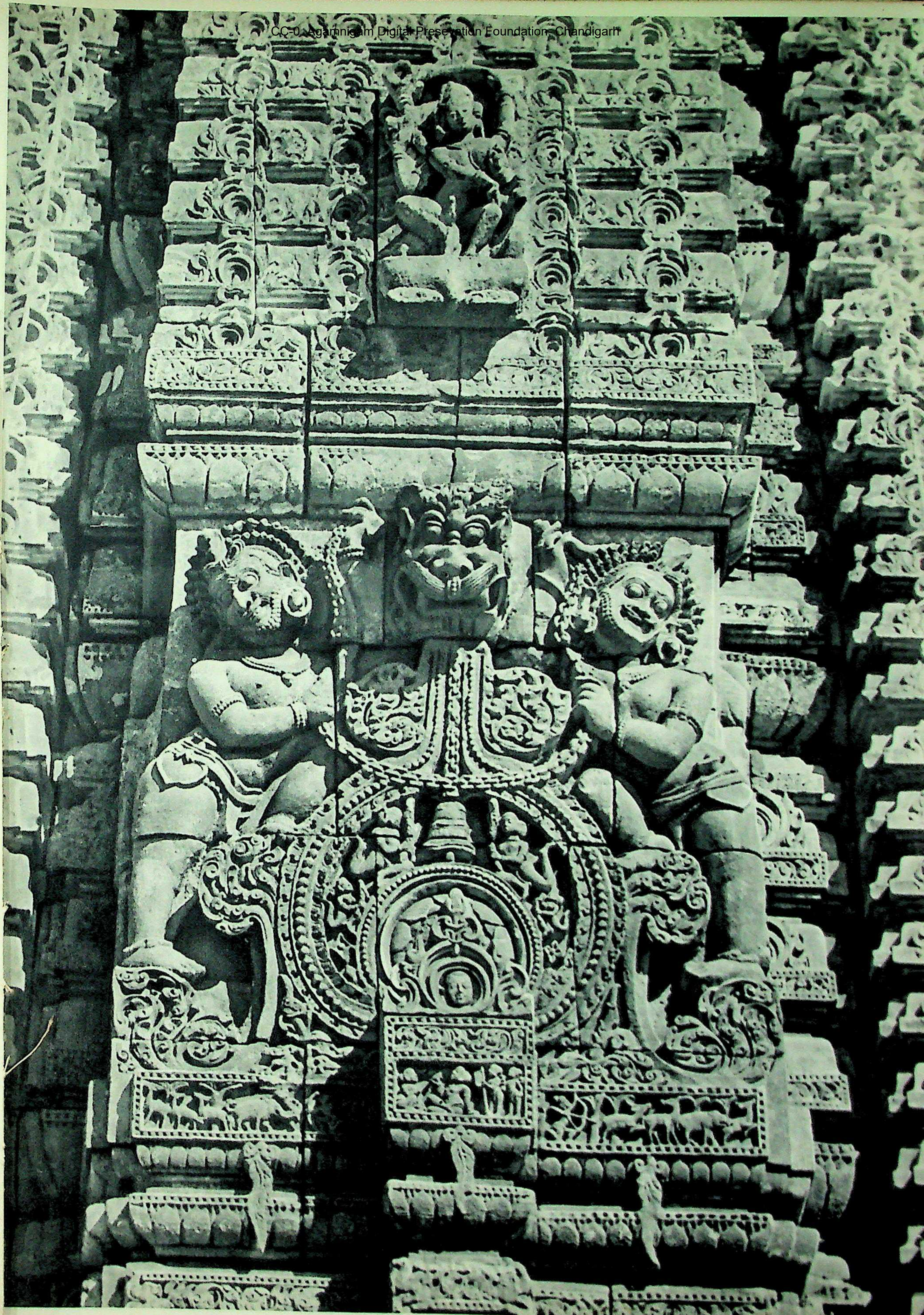

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Naga (genie of the Underworld).
Mukteshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 10th century.

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Ornamental pattern of the tower.
Mukteshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 10th century.

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Apsara.
Mukteshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 10th century.

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Monkeys, crab, and crocodile.
Brahmeshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 11th century.

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Gandharva (celestial musician).
Brahmeshvara temple.
Bhuvaneshvara, 11th century.

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Hamsa, the sacred goose.
Brahmeshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 11th century.

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Ornamental pattern.
Brahmeshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 11th century.

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Sign of the Zodiac.
Brahmeshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 11th century.

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Sign of the Zodiac.
Brahmeshvara temple,
Bhuvaneshvara, 11th century.

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